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SUBJECT: JUNTA ARRESTS TOP TWO CUSTOMS OFFICIALS

¶1. (U) Military officials recently arrested and detained controversial Customs Director Olga Syradin and her Deputy Director, Aboubacar Bruno Bangoura. According to reports, two trucks of armed soldiers arrived at Customs headquarters in downtown Conakry at approximately 1700 hours on 7 January. Soldiers told both officials to board the trucks to be taken to Camp Alpha Yaya, the residence of the ruling junta, for questioning. Syradin reportedly convinced the soldiers to allow her to drive her personal vehicle to the camp.

¶2. (SBU) A source later told POL LES that the CNDD had released Syradin and told her to return to her duties as Director. The CNDD later announced that Bangoura had been dismissed from his position. As of 12 January, he was still under arrest at the camp. Alpha Yaya Diallo, a member of the CNDD and reported ally of Syradin, replaced Bangoura as Deputy Director. Diallo was previously the chief customs inspector at Conakry's main fuel terminal at the Port of Conakry and has been a reliable Embassy contact in the past.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT. Guinea's notoriously corrupt Customs Service provides a substantial portion of the government's revenue. Officially, the wealthy Director of Customs earns GNF 400,000--about \$85--per month. Incidentally, several of her children attend a private French pre-school, as do several Embassy children, for which the annual tuition is 1,500 Euros per child. By installing a CNDD member and Syradin ally as deputy director of Customs, the junta may be consolidating its grip on an important revenue stream, either to ensure that access to funds are controlled, or to give members of the junta itself access to the funds. END COMMENT.

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